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ABSTRACT

Land grant institutions and state universities have a long history of involvement in Clergy Continuing Education and continue to encourage such programs because: (1) clergy are important community leaders, (2) they could become an important support group, and (3) they have information needs related to their activity in such public policy matters as agriculture and community and rural life. A 1982 study similar to studies done in 1970 and 1975 found that 17 states had Clergy Continuing Education programs in 1982, 3 states had programs in 1970 but not in 1982, 11 states had programs in 1975 but not in 1982, and 4 states had programs in 1982 but not in 1975. In addition, 21 other states felt they had from slight to strong possibilities that they would initiate or renew such programs by 1988. The National Extension Committee on Clergy Continuing Education is attempting to expand linkages between denominations, land grant institutions, and state universities, and to develop more training material and procedures that could be used by clergy from urban backgrourds who find themselves experiencing "culture shock" in rural settings. Areas in which clergy and university staff could work together include committee membership, co-sponsoring programs, and sharing meeting space and expertise. (BRR)

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LAND GRANT AND STATE UNIVERSITIES' CURRENT INVOLVEMENT IN CLERGY CONTINUING EDUCATION

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Paper presented at the Annual Rural Sociology Society Meeting, College Station, Texas, August 24, 1984.

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LAND GRANT AND STATE UNIVERSITIES' CURRENT INVOLVEMENT IN CLERGY CONTINUING EDUCATION*

In 1982 a survey of Clergy Continuing Education programs was conducted by Marvin Konyha, ES-USDA and me. We were interested in learning whether the institution ever conducted Clergy Continuing Education programs, whether such progams were currently being conducted, and whether there were plans for such programs in the future. A similar survey was conducted in 1970 and 1975 by Dorris Rivers, ES-USDA. The results were:

17 states had programs in 1982
3 states had programs in 1970 but not in 1982
11 states had programs in 1975 but not in 1962
4 states had programs in 1982 but not in 1975

when asked about projecting for future programs, response for programs by 1988 was:

7 states thought they had strong possibilities
8 states thought they had fair possibilities
6 states thought they had slight possibilities

of these 21 additional states, 8 have had programs previously.

A newsletter was written by the National Extension Committee on Clergy Continuing Education. It was edited by Jim Sparks, University of Wisconsin and mailed by him to all contact persons at each land grant college and state university as well as seminaries. This newsletter, Vol. 1 (an annual publication) came out in June, 1984.

One of the items of interest to the National Committee is how it can continue to keep states informed of possibilities for Clergy Continuing Education through some type of linkage between denominations, land grant institutions and state universities. How to accomplish this is still to be worked out.

Another objective is to develop more training material and procedures that could be used by rural and small town clergy as they come out of urban backgrounds and find themselves in rural settings. Many report dismay and frustration as a result of "cultural shock" experienced due to differences in community dynamics. It is hoped that some in-depth teaching material on rural sociology and related subjects might be developed to help clergy understand how their experiences fit or do not fit what is known from existing knowledge.

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*Presented at the Rural Sociology Society Meeting, College Station, Texas, August 24, 1984, by Dr. David C. Ruesink, Extension Sociologist and Chairman, National Extension Committee for Clergy Continuing Education.

Why do we want to push Clergy Continuing Education programs at state universities? Partly because:

1. Clergy are important community leaders.

2. Clergy could become an important support group.

3. Clergy are active in public policy matters related to agriculture, community and rural life. They need to be tied in with as much information as possible related to these subjects.

Some of the ways churches and universities could work together include:

1. Encouraging clergy to serve on Extension advisory committees - especially:

   - Family living
   - Community development
   - 4-H and youth

2. Utilizing church space for educational meetings.

3. Churches could co-sponsor educational programs of interest to community leaders such as:

   - alcohol use and abuse
   - communications
   - community beautification
   - crime prevention and control
   - drug use and abuse
   - economic development
   - family life education
   - gardening
   - health care
   - leadership development
   - nutrition
   - planning for community growth
   - using talents of retirees
   - youth development
   - etc., etc.

University personnel could serve as resource persons for denominations with committees discussing secular topics such as:

- agricultural policies
- conservation of resources
- farm labor
- hunger
- preservation of the family farm
- problems related to community decline and/or growth

These items are meant to be starters rather than exhaustive for stimulating thinking about how the church and rural sociology might be related. Input from others is welcomed.